

Departmental Business Plan and Outlook

Department Name: Building

Fiscal Years:

2005 - 2006

&

2006 - 2007

Plan Date: December 7, 2005

Approved by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Charles Danger".

Charles Danger, P.E.
Department Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Johnson".

Bill Johnson
Assistant County Manager

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Pages 1-2

I. INTRODUCTION

	3
Department Purpose/Mission Statement	3
Department Description	3-5
Organization and Staffing Levels	6-7
Fiscal Environment	7-8
Business Environment	8-9
Customer Feedback Plan	10
Critical Success Factors	10-12
Future Outlook	12-13
Overview	13-14

II. THE PLAN

13-14

Goals:

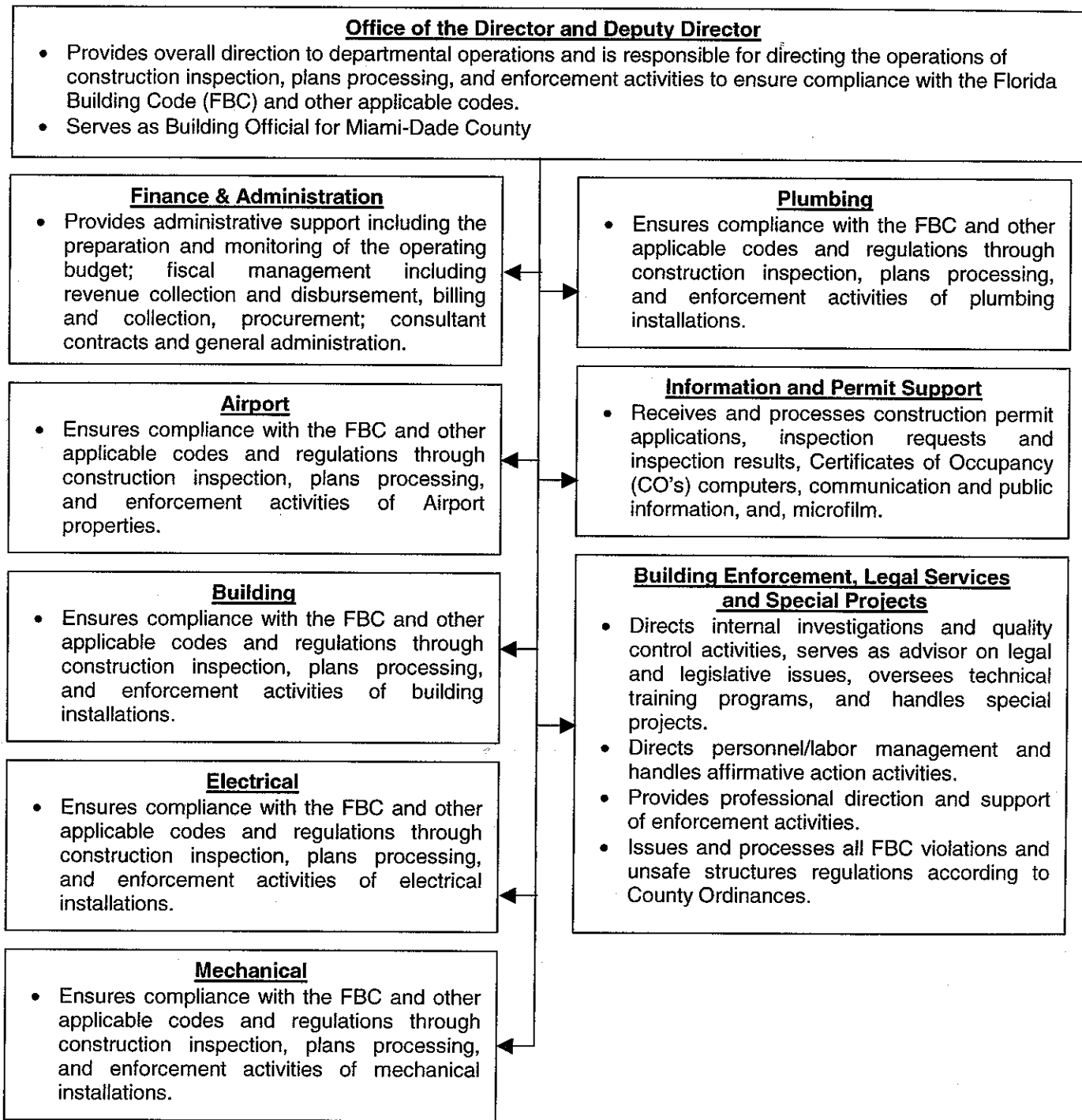
Use consistent, fair and effective means to achieve code compliance.

Create a more business-friendly environment in Miami-Dade County.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Brief description of the department

The Building Department provides building permit services and enforces building codes and regulations governing new construction, maintenance and alteration of existing buildings and unsafe structures within the area of unincorporated Miami-Dade County.



Most significant major programs, initiatives or milestones to be achieved during the current and next fiscal year

1. Reduce the response time to citizens' complaints to five working days.
2. Reduce the processing time of unsafe structure cases to 240 days.
3. Reduce the time to demolish a building after the demolition order is issued to 15 days.
4. Increase resident and business voluntary compliance with the code.
5. Complete 100% of all residential plan review within 20 working days.
6. Complete 100% of all commercial plan review within 24 working days.
7. Eliminate inspection carry-overs.
8. Enhanced customer service environment.
9. Work with the 311 Answer Center to enhance customer service.

Significant factors critical to the department's successful implementation of the Business Plan

1. Aggressive recruitment and retention of technical staff is essential to the implementation of all the initiatives.
2. Streamlining the Unsafe Structures Enforcement case process is essential to the implementation of initiative number 2.
3. Centralization of the County's enforcement complaint intake is essential to the implementation of initiative number 1.
4. Aggressive prosecution of State contractors by local and state disciplinary boards is essential to the implementation of initiative number 4.
5. Increasing the dedicated enforcement staff and locating other sources of enforcement funding is essential to the implementation of initiatives 1, 2 and 4.
6. Incorporation and Annexation. Initiatives 1, 2, 5, 6, and 7 will be substantially impacted by incorporation and annexation should all the areas that are currently under consideration become cities.
7. Alternative Plan Review and Inspection Process initiatives 1, 2, 5, 6, and 7 will be impacted if the use of this permitting activity continues to increase.
8. Interactive Voice Response System upgrade is essential to the implementation of initiatives 8 and 9.

INTRODUCTION

Department Purpose/Mission Statement

Provide efficient, accountable, and responsive building permit processing and enforce regulations governing buildings and unsafe structures while responding to the building industry and protecting citizens.

Department Description

Building Department major duties and responsibilities

- Review and process construction permit applications. Route applications to other County departments involved in the permit process.
- Perform plan review of construction documents to ensure compliance with the Florida Building Code and all other applicable codes and regulations.
- Issue building permits and maintain records of construction documents.
- Collect and distribute permit fees for all departments involved in the permitting process.
- Receive and process inspection requests.
- Perform inspection of active permits to ensure compliance with the Florida Building Code and all other applicable codes and regulations.
- Issue permanent and temporary certificates of occupancy and completion.
- Receive and process complaints related to building code violations and unsafe structures.

Brief History of the Department

The Building Department was created in October 1998. In previous years, the Department had been part of the former Planning Development and Regulation Department (1995 through 1998) and the Building and Zoning Department (prior to 1995).

Significant events that continue to impact the Department's purpose or mission

- Hurricane Andrew significantly increased permit activity and brought to the forefront the problem relating to permits that expire without being finalized. There are approximately 168,252 permits that are expired and lacking mandatory inspections. This total represents only a 3% reduction with respect to the previous fiscal year. The number of expired permits continues to demand that the Department spend substantial resources to correct and prevent this type of violation.
- Under Section 8-16 of the Miami-Dade County Code, after winds of hurricane velocity are experienced and have subsided, the Building Official is required to initiate an investigation to determine if damage has occurred to buildings or other structures. As further provided for in the same code section, no building or structure, which was damaged, can be repaired without inspection and approval by the Building Official.

During the 2005 hurricane season Miami-Dade County was affected by two hurricanes:

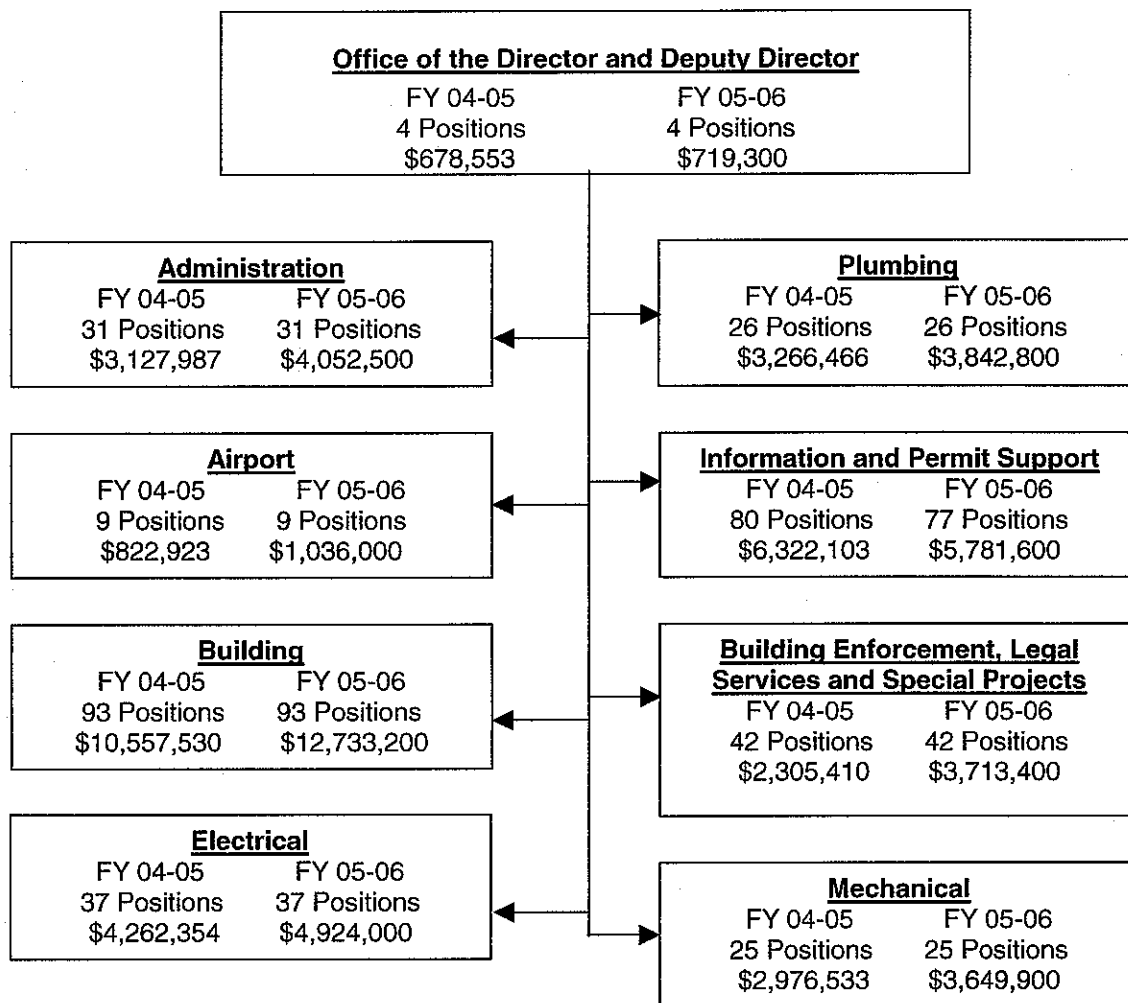
Katrina, and Wilma. Immediately after their passage over the Miami-Dade County territory, Building Department inspectors surveyed the unincorporated area of the County and the City of West Miami to conduct the required structural safety inspections. The damage caused by these events originated an unpredictable increase in the workload of the enforcement and unsafe structures units. Further, the regular unsafe and enforcement activities are placed on hold until hurricane structural safety inspections are completed. Not having the ability to supplement the dedicated inspectors it is estimated that the department will have difficulties in reaching the goals related to enforcement activities. To illustrate, immediately after the path of Hurricane Wilma 263 cases were opened within a couple of weeks. This represents about 30% of the cases that are opened in a regular year. Additionally, the follow up of enforcement and unsafe structure cases was placed on hold during 32 days, resulting in that much delay for all pending activities.

- Over the past years, the Department has been the subject of several Grand Jury Investigations. Recommendations from the Grand Jury have significantly impacted departmental operations including:
 - Limiting daily inspection workloads.
 - Reorganization and restructure of the department.
 - Changes in security relating to technology and public access to inspectors/plan examiners.
 - Significant permitting process changes.
- Technology has been and will continue to be utilized to improve efficiency, make information available to the department's patrons via the Internet and eliminate routine tasks previously performed by inspectors, plans examiners and clerical staff. Departmental records are available on the Internet, as well as, the ability to receive various services such as permit inspections and appointments. This technological revolution has improved the operation but has had a cost implication to the department.
- Future incorporations and annexations currently in process could have a major impact on the Department. There are a couple of extremely important factors, which will influence the timing of the impact on the Department. The effect of an annexation is immediate versus incorporation, which has a delayed effect on activities within the Department. Under the terms of the executed master inter-local agreements, newly created municipalities are not required to establish their own building departments immediately. As such the Department continues to provide all permitting services at the same level as prior to incorporation. Additionally, after a transition date has been established for the new building department to assume all permitting and enforcement functions, the Department continues to perform plan reviews and inspections related to building permits for applications received prior to the transition date.
- As new construction codes become effective, the Department must maintain the ability to continue to enforce all previous code editions that apply to active permit applications and active permits that were secured under those previous requirements. The overlapping period extends for years demanding from our staff the simultaneous

enforcement of multiple sets of rules. For instance, the department continues to work on active permits that were secured under the 1994 edition of the South Florida Building Code (SFBC), and the 2001 and 2003 editions of the Florida Building Code (FBC), while the currently adopted Code is the 2004 edition of the FBC. The Florida Building Commission has already adopted the 2005 revision to the 2004 FBC. Both the change from the 1994 edition of the SFBC to the 2001 edition of the FBC and the change from the 2001 to the 2004 edition of the FBC represented drastic change which had a substantial impact not only on the Department, but also on its patrons. The construction industry and design professionals must also go through the learning process and update their design tools (e.g. design software). The learning process extends months beyond the adoption date of the code. The period of adjustment to the new code is marked by an increase in the rate of plan review and inspection rejections by the Department.

- The volume of permits issued by the Department under the provisions of F.S. 553.791 had minor impact in the plan review and inspection functions of the Building Department during Fiscal Year 2004-2005 (less than 1% of the overall permitting activity). However, there has been a noticeable increase in the amount of private providers who are currently registered to provide these services. The growing numbers of these companies have hindered the Department's ability to hire and retain qualified technical plan review and inspection staff.

Organization and Staffing Levels



Changes in major programs, staffing levels and organization from the prior year focused on the performance impacts of these changes

- 1) Ordinance No. 05-120 established Unsafe Structures Appeal Panels to provide an alternative appeal hearing process for unsafe structures cases involving single-family homes and duplex residences. This hearing process initiated in October, 2005 is expected to enhance the department's ability to meet its business plan goal of reducing the average processing time to handle unsafe structures cases from intake to closing. The Board of County Commissioners approved this process on a one-year trial basis.
- 2) Due to the complexity and sensitivity of the on-going expansion project at the Miami International Airport (MIA) the department's satellite office at MIA was upgraded to a division in FY 04-05. The Building Airport Division is staffed with ten professional employees and support staff who are responsible for all inspection and plans processing activities for MIA and four other airport facilities.

Staffing Levels

Functional Unit	FY 04-05 Budget (Prior Year)	FY 05-06 Budget (Current Year)
Administration	44	44
Information & Permit Support	80	77
Permitting	190	190
Unsafe Structures	33	33
Total	347	344

Fiscal Environment

Revenues and Expenditures by Fund

(All Dollars in Thousands)

	Total Annual Budget		
	Prior Fiscal Year 2004-2005 Actual	Current Fiscal Year 2005-2006 Budget	Projection as of November 30, 2005
Revenues			
Permitting	34,884	28,948	28,686
Unsafe Structures	1,554	800	800
Miscellaneous	600	425	425
Reimbursements	1,321	1,500	1,500
Carryover	11,990	8,784	8,784
Total	50,349	40,457	40,195
Expenditures			
Administration	4,648	5,773	5,700
Info & Permit Support	6,322	5,656	5,600
Permitting	21,886	27,650	27,545
Aviation Reimbursement	(1,475)	(1,500)	(1,500)
Unsafe Structures	1,464	2,878	2,850
Total	32,845	40,457	40,195

Equity in pooled cash (for proprietary funds only)

Fund/Subfund	FY 2004-05 Beginning of Year Actual	FY 2004-05 End of Year Actual	FY 2005-06 Current Year-End Budget
030 / 060	9,271	11,990	8,784
Total *	9,271	11,990	8,784

* Please note: Pooled cash consists of Fund Balance

Major funding sources, major variances in revenues and expenditures from prior years, and significant in-kind services here focused on performance impacts

The Department's FY 04-05 revenue collections, related to permitting, increased 13.4% from the previous fiscal year, which will help provide additional funding for ongoing projects including: concurrent plan processing, digitizing of microfilm records, and proposed recommendations by the Office of Strategic Business Management to improve the Land Use and Permitting Process. Additionally, the Department is exploring alternative/other funding sources to supplement enforcement activity related to work without permit and unsafe structures (i.e. grants, ticket surcharge, selling liens, etc.).

Business Environment

1. Customers Served

The majority of the Building Department customers related to permitting services are contractors, design professionals and/or plan expeditors. Less than 1% of the customers utilizing permit services are owner builders. However, with regard to enforcement activity, the proportion of cases against property owners is much larger.

2. Anticipated Code Changes and Impact of those Changes

On October 1, 2005 the 2004 edition of the Florida Building Code and the Florida Residential Code became effective. Building code changes may have a powerful impact on the Building Department, particularly when they are comprehensive and extensive, which is the case of this recent one.

The code change started to affect the Department months ahead of implementation. Substantial amount of time and resources were dedicated to review the changes and determine the impact on the permitting process and to train both technical and permit support staff. The changes generated substantial amount of computer re-programming to modify the intake, plan review and inspection applications.

Now that the new code is effective the Department must maintain the ability to continue to enforce all previous code editions that apply to active permit applications and active permits that were secured under those previous requirements. The overlapping period

extends for years demanding from our staff the simultaneous enforcement of multiple sets of rules.

The construction industry and design professionals must also go through the learning process of these new set of rules and must update their design tools (e.g. design software). The learning process extends months beyond the adoption date of the code. The period of adjustment to the new code is marked by an increase in the rate of plan review and inspection rejections by the Department.

3. Geographical Areas Served

The Department currently provides service to the Unincorporated Municipal Service Area (UMSA) in Miami-Dade County and the City of West Miami. Additionally, as a result of recently incorporated municipalities or annexed land, the Department continues to issue subsidiary permits in connection with active permits that were issued prior to the date of assumption of service, and will continue to perform inspections for all active permits until completion.

4. List of Competitors

A) Permitting Services by Private Providers

Prior to March 1, 2002, the Department relied only upon its own staff for the issuance of building permits. With the adoption of the Florida Building Code on March 1, 2002, permits by affidavit became an available option, which provides for the issuance of permits relying upon a sworn affidavit from a registered professional. On October 1, 2002 a state law introduced permitting services by private providers, which reaffirmed the issuance of building permits based upon the performance of plan review and inspections by private licensed professionals.

The volume of permits issued by the Department using the private providers' option represents less than 1% of the overall permitting activity, resulting in no impact to the required staffing levels. The increase of private companies providing these services continues to hinder the Department's ability to hire and retain inspectors and plans examiners.

B) Incorporation and Annexation

To date incorporation and annexation have had a moderate impact on the Department's revenue and staffing levels, this impact however has been negated by the overall growth in activity throughout the Unincorporated Municipal Services Areas. The areas currently under consideration for incorporation or annexation represent approximately 20% of the Department's FY 04-05 activity. Incorporation of all of these areas may result in a significant impact to the Department's revenue and staffing levels should this happen during the current fiscal year.

Customer Feedback Plan

Unsafe Structures customer service survey forms have been developed to obtain feedback on staff performance, gauge satisfaction with the timeliness of case resolution, obtain information from the public on other properties with unsafe structures and solicit their suggestions for improvements in the enforcement case process. With the implementation of the new enforcement case process, as cases are closed, the customer service surveys will be sent to all complainants. The information gathered will be utilized to improve the case handling process.

Customer satisfaction surveys were developed by the Office of Strategic Business Management (OSBM) and distributed to industry, as well as, posted on the Department's website. This was done as part of the Permitting Review performed by OSBM and will be provided as part of the finalized study. Additionally, the department is participating in the Secret Shopper Program. Customer Satisfaction Surveys are available in the department for completion by patrons and drop-off lock boxes are provided for collection.

Critical Success Factors

1. Aggressive recruitment and retention of technical staff

In FY 2004-2005, the Building Department implemented increasingly proactive actions in order to improve recruitment and retention of technical staff. In February 2005, the department submitted to the Employee Relations Department (ERD) a request to upgrade various classifications including all Plans Processor positions. Following a study the request was approved in April 2005 for the positions below:

- Building, Roofing, Mechanical, Plumbing, Electrical and Structural Plans Processors
- All Division Directors
- Building, Roofing, Plumbing, Electrical, Mechanical and Structural Section Supervisors
- Assistant Building Section Supervisor
- Assistant Division Director for Enforcement

In addition to increasing the salary range, the position of Structural Plans Processor was advertised "Salary Negotiable" and the recruitment was open on a continuous basis until all vacancies were filled.

In an effort to improve our recruitment of Inspectors, our department has continued to advertise these positions "Salary Negotiable" and to hire new employees at an intermediate rate of step 2. Building Inspector, Building Plans Processor, Mechanical Field Unit Supervisor and Roofing Inspector positions are also being advertised "Open Until Further Notice." Additionally, the position of Building Inspector, which is the most difficult to fill, is advertised on the Building Department web page. Our department will also be advertising this position in trade association publications in an effort to reach a broader applicant pool. The department will monitor the result of the measures taken and re-evaluate at the end of FY 2005-2006.

The position of Building Inspector was advertised nine times in FY 04-05 producing only ten qualified applicants. Beginning in August, this position was advertised "Open Until Further Notice." Some advertisements resulted in no qualified applicants.

2. Streamlining of Unsafe Structures Enforcement

Ordinance No. 05-120, adopted in June 2005, established Unsafe Structures Appeal Panels. The Appeal Panels comprised of hearing officers will resolve unsafe structures case appeals of the Building Officials' decisions involving residential buildings. Under the one-year pilot program, the department will be able to evaluate whether the new procedures will further streamline the enforcement case process.

DERM has recently discontinued performing asbestos surveys on commercial buildings for the Building Department. As a result, the Building Department must rely on outside vendors to perform this work. With additional steps to be added to the enforcement case process, staff will have to access available County contracts for these services and explore other alternatives to reduce case processing times.

A new demolition services contract must be negotiated next year. New elements of the contract must be included to encourage the participation of as many contractors as possible.

3. Centralization of the County's enforcement complaint intake

Centralization of the County's enforcement complaint intake is essential to accomplishing the objectives of reducing response time to citizens' complaints. The Department developed an interdepartmental complaint intake form, which has eliminated some of the duplication of enforcement efforts. Further improvement will be realized if a centralized intake system for complaints was developed. The Department will work towards achieving access to other County systems to avoid duplication of enforcement activities.

4. Aggressive Prosecution of State Contractors

An increase in the number of State Contractors prosecuted is expected to result in a deterrent effect in the number of expired permit cases generated.

5. Increasing the dedicated enforcement staff and locating other source of enforcement funding

To achieve a significant increase in enforcement efforts and to move to proactive enforcement the Department requires an increase in enforcement staff and a dedicated source of funding.

6. Incorporation and Annexation

Incorporation and Annexation have had a moderate impact on the Department. If areas currently under consideration for future incorporation (i.e. Redlands, Biscayne Gardens, Goulds, Plant) or annexation (i.e. Doral, Sweetwater) are realized they could have a major impact on the Department's revenue and staffing level. Permit fees (revenue) are collected when the permit is issued (upon plan review approval, but prior to inspections); however, the Department continues to incur costs related to a permit, months and even years after initial issuance. A plan to reserve a portion of permit fees collected in areas of potential incorporation or annexation that would allow the Department to maintain current levels of service through the transition period is currently being studied.

7. Alternative Plan Review and Inspection Process

The alternative plan review and inspection process allows the owner to use a private provider for the plan review and inspections associated with the permitting process. The volume of permits issued by the Department under the provisions of F.S. 553.791 continues to have minor impact in the plan review and inspection functions of the Building Department during 2004-05 (less than 1% of the overall permitting activity). However, there has been a noticeable increase in the amount of private providers who are currently registered to provide these services. The growing number of companies continues to hinder the Department's ability to hire and retain qualified technical plan review and inspection staff.

Additionally, during FY 2002-03 the alternative plan review and inspection process was only utilized by commercial developers. However, during FY 2003-04 and FY 2004-05 the process has been utilized by residential developers as well. Therefore, the Department must closely monitor the program and its impact on the Department's functions.

8. Interactive Voice Response (IVR)

The replacement of the existing Development, Permitting and Inspection Interactive Voice Response System continues to be delayed. The existing system is experiencing regular failures of hardware. Due to the system's age, replacement parts are extremely difficult to find and the industry frequently experiences an outage in service.

Since June 3, 2005, the Enterprise Technology Department has been re-negotiating with IBM the original Statement of Work (SOW) dated August 29, 2002 for replacement of the IVR.

Future Outlook

1. The Department will continue to develop technology to improve efficiency and eliminate routine clerical duties.

2. The Department will continue to expand the electronic applications with programmatic review when possible.
3. The Department will continue to deploy technology to other regulatory departments where feasible to reduce permit and inspection cycle time.
4. The Department will continue to pursue providing permitting services for other areas of jurisdiction.
5. The Department will continue to train staff for improved customer service.
6. The Department will continue to search for alternative funding sources for enforcement activities.
7. The Department will continue to develop new strategies for the recruitment of building inspectors and other technical staff.

The Plan

Overview

Our FY 2005-2006 business plan is a continuation of previously adopted work and a reflection of the Miami-Dade County Strategic Plan. The Miami-Dade County's Strategic Planning initiative is both a plan and a process. The plan provides a framework at a broad Countywide level to establish objectives, how to achieve them and how to measure progress along the way. The process ensures increased communications at all levels of County government using consistent terms.

As part of the County's Strategic Plan, the Board of County Commissioners endorsed nine priority strategic themes countywide. This Department is primarily supportive of the following strategic themes:

- Ensure Miami-Dade County operates in a fiscally responsible and stable manner;
- Improve the quality of life for all Miami-Dade County residents;
- Protect the safety and quality of Miami-Dade County's neighborhoods;
- Continuously improve the performance and capabilities of Miami-Dade County operations by maximizing technology, fostering innovation, and increasing access to and information regarding services.
- Promote cooperation and coordination among all government services.

Supporting these themes are supporting goals and priority outcomes that directly relate to this Department. These are provided along with the Department's Programs, Initiatives, and Performance Measures for fiscal year 2006.

Department-related Strategic Plan Goals:

- Use consistent, fair and effective means to achieve code compliance
- Create a more business-friendly environment in Miami-Dade County

Department-related Strategic Plan Priority Outcomes:

- Timely identification and remediation of nuisances, including unsafe structures
- Resident and business voluntary compliance with County Codes
- Consistent interpretation and application of enforcement practices
- Customer-friendly environment for regulated business and entities doing business with Miami-Dade County